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## **The Response to Dissonance in Cross-Cultural Living**

Now that we are aware that cross-cultural living will inevitably produce feelings that lead to **dissonance**. What are we going to do about it? What will our **Response** communicate to those with whom we strive to serve and share God's Word?

**Key Question: How should we respond to cross-cultural dissonance?**

**Observe** - I've learned so much in my life from observing the cultures around me. What words do they use? What does this symbol mean to their culture? What does their prayer stance mean? As you watch and reflect, take note of the details and the interactions of their cultural group. What can I learn from our differences?

**Inquire** - Have you ever heard the phrase, "You don't know what you don't know." So how do you grow to know? You ask questions. Avoid shallow, on the surface questions. As you grow in relationships in your ministry, ask questions about their cultural norms, morals, their community's needs, and their personal motivations. Ask deep questions out of love!!!

**Listen** - James 1:19 says, "My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry." We strive to take the inspired Word of God to heart. As we listen to the challenges and the victories of the culture that we serve, we are attentive and engaged as listeners. It's so tempting to want to talk and share our views and feelings in that moment, but it's better to sit back and listen to those who we serve also.

**Initiate** - One may think that there is a finite number of opportunities to grow in your cross-cultural understanding. That is not true. Initiate many opportunities to build bridges with those who you cross-culturally interact. This can be an uncomfortable situation, but being uncomfortable builds capacity and promotes growth. If cross-cultural living and ministry is important to you and your team, initiating more opportunities for cross-cultural interactions as a Response is necessary.

**Next Question: How should we not respond to cross-cultural dissonance?**

**Criticize** - Serving in ministry and being a Christian requires a level of humility and open-mindedness to serve those around us. Criticizing cross-cultural differences does not communicate humility. It communicates arrogance towards anything that is different, including cultural norms, morals, values, and a host of other cultural differences.

**Rationalize** - The easiest response to cross-cultural **dissonance** (or any conflicts for that matter) is to rationalize why the interactions were unsuccessful. Rationalizations can be described as fancy excuses. Excuses can have a detrimental impact on a ministry's commitment to cross-cultural outreach.

**Isolate** - Isolation is the best way to destroy your efforts to evangelize in cross-cultural settings. This is common for many churches and schools. They isolate and serve only those in their buildings and ignore the command of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. Your **response** to cross-cultural **dissonance** should never be isolation because we know how important the time of grace is for those on this earth.

The goal is to have positive results of cross-cultural living and interactions, thus **our Response to dissonance** is significant. These interactions will lead to a ministry that thrives in cross-cultural outreach and evangelism. Your **Response to dissonance** is an impactful moment in your journey to build bridges in your cross-cultural ministries. If you can control your **Response**, your **Results** will be amazing for the betterment of your ministries.